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THE GALTON LECTURE, 1946

Presentation of the Society's Gold Medal

ON February 14th, 1946, before a large gathering of Fellows, Members and guests at Manson House, London, Lord Keynes, on behalf of the *Eugenics Society*, presented the first Galton Medal to Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders "in recognition of outstanding contributions to the study of eugenics and unremitting service to the *Society* extending over thirty-five years"; and following this agreeable ceremony Professor Godfrey Thomson delivered the Galton lecture under the title "The Trend of National Intelligence."

Award of Galton Medal

Opening the proceedings, Lord Keynes said:

It is a satisfaction to take part in the presentation of the first Galton Gold Medal, both in piety to the memory of the great Galton and in recognition of a worthy and appropriate recipient of a medal established in his name.

I say "appropriate," because the virtue of Carr-Saunders as of Galton lies in his belonging to, and overlapping, several branches of relevant knowledge instead of over-specializing in one, and having, in particular, reached sociology and eugenics, not from the economic side, but from the side of biology and Darwinianism.

It is, I think, suitable to preface the presentation of this medal by a few words of piety and remembrance to Francis Galton. His various and peculiar genius—so different from that of his kinsman Charles Darwin—lay, not in continuous concentration of mind, but in continuous diffusion; not following a single inspired idea to its logical and experimental conclusion, but striking out sparks in every direction, many of which

never became a flame and of which the rest had to be nursed and blown upon by the hands and breaths of others. For my own part, as I make no doubt was the case with Carr-Saunders, it was very early in life that I became fascinated and amused with the work of Galton. I confess that I found the very characteristic *Statistical Enquiries into the Efficacy of Prayer* more fun than the far more valuable work on Finger-prints. I used to like that map of Bradshaw he carried about; and the little episode of the lion and the donkey in what I still think one of the most charming of all his works, but now I suspect little read, *The Art of Travel*.

Galton's eccentric, sceptical, observing, flashing, cavalry-leader type of mind led him eventually to become the founder of the most important, significant and, I would add, *genuine* branch of sociology which exists, namely eugenics.

Which leads me, by a natural transition, from Galton to his worthy and distinguished disciple Carr-Saunders, who is in common estimation to-day the most distinguished sociologist in the country. He and I were, I believe, at school together not far short of fifty years ago. But I was just that much senior, which prevented my knowing him then. Anyway Carr-Saunders was a slow beginner. He did not know what he wanted. Almost by chance, I gather, he got started on zoology, so far as his head was concerned, whilst his heart was set from the beginning on social and political affairs; a combination which led, not by chance, but inevitably, to precisely that mixed training which is so essential for a mixed scientist. Charles Darwin incidentally repaid a debt. Whilst Darwin was first led to his theories by reading Malthus, Carr-Saunders was led to Malthus through Darwin. Problems of population became his main concern, but essentially approached through the biological background of man and his habits and customs and not primarily through the economic approach. Although it has all ended up in Carr-Saunders becoming the head of one of the leading economic faculties in the country, it was through this "other" approach that the peculiar value of his various contributions has largely arisen. In addition, in the true Galtonian spirit, he has cast his net wide, and a book such as Carr-Saunders's on *The Professions* would, I am sure, have appealed to his forerunner not less than his signal contributions to the problems of population and eugenics.

It is an honour and a pleasure to be the instrument of handing the Galton Gold Medal of the *Eugenics Society* to Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders.

The presentation was then made amid general applause, and Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders replied as follows:

I wish to thank the *Eugenics Society* most warmly for the very great honour which has been conferred upon me. Nothing has ever given me more pleasure; from my undergraduate days I have believed that in the long run nothing matters more to the human race than the possession of a sound genetic endowment. In the midst of so many immediate problems it is a great thing that the *Society* should continue to press this view. I hope that the *Society* will never be deterred by disappointment because it does not seem to be making headway. If it persists, and if human affairs are conducted in the light of knowledge, the day will certainly come when the matter of genetic endowment will be a major preoccupation of men.

It puzzles me to know why I have been judged worthy of the honour. One service indeed I have rendered to the *Society*; I have paid my subscription regularly for thirty-six years. As a member of the Council of more than one society I know how valuable faithful supporters are—not cantankerous enough to threaten resignation when things do not please them, and not shrewd enough to take out life subscriptions when young. It was in 1910, so far as I can remember, that I joined the *Society*. Sir Francis Galton, to whom we owe the word "eugenics," was then alive; indeed, he died in 1911 at the advanced age of 89. Membership did, however, bring one into contact with one man, so outstanding that

I must mention him, Major Leonard Darwin. He had true greatness of character; that no one who knew him can doubt. He had a sure insight into men and things. It was this insight which led him to give unwavering support to the *Society* at a time when the ordering of its affairs was not easy, and to conduct them with such success. It is proper that the *Eugenics Society* should be proud of its lineage, and what ancestry could be better than that which traces itself back to the cousin and to the son of Charles Darwin?

Those years round 1910 were difficult; the first enthusiasm had passed—generated by the acceptance of Charles Darwin's explanation of the origin of species and leading to the simple programme that man should take the guidance of his own evolution into his own hands. Doubts had arisen; what after all did we know more than that like tends to produce like—a vague generalization upon which to found a programme. But since those days the mechanism of inheritance has been laid bare—due largely to the work of T. H. Morgan and his pupils. Those amazing discoveries give us sure ground where all was insecure before. We have no longer to meet the charge that no more is known about one of our chief interests, namely inheritance, than was known to herdsmen ever since the domestication of animals began. It is quite true that the identification of genes and the determination of their behaviour has hardly begun, so far as the human species is concerned; this work is impeded in many obvious ways, such as the impossibility of experiment, but also in a manner not so obvious at first sight but still more important, and that is by the present small size of the human family. But this does not mean that we do not know how in general inheritance works in the human race. Quite the contrary is the case; we do know, and this knowledge, and not the detailed knowledge which still eludes us, is what we need in order to understand the biological importance of social change.

The latest advances in knowledge of genetics are of profound interest to us. As members of this *Society*, however, we are more directly concerned with advances in social investigation. Only when we have an analysis of social structure and of the changes occurring in it, is our knowledge of genetics of use to us in relation to our broad interests. In this matter thirty-five years ago, as in the case of inheritance, all was guess-work. We could do no more than hazard the opinion that certain social groups were distinguished by the possession of particular inheritable characteristics, and that these groups, relatively to the whole population, were on the up or down grade. In this sphere also a great change has taken place. Though there has been no dramatic unveiling of the secrets of nature, we have witnessed the elaboration of methods of measuring characteristics, of the application of these methods on a large scale, and of the assessment of changes in the proportion which groups having measurable characteristics form of the whole population.

I have in mind especially the elaboration of the technique of testing intelligence and of its application to the problem of the relation between fertility and intelligence which has always been foremost in our thoughts. No one has contributed more to the solution of this problem than Professor Godfrey Thomson, the Galton Lecturer this year, holder of the chair of Education in the University of Edinburgh, and Director of Studies at the Edinburgh Training Centre which under him has become famous as a centre of research. Twenty-five years ago he began to investigate the connection between intelligence and fertility, when he made a notable inquiry in Northumberland. Though many other important problems have also been engaging his attention, he has continued to advance our knowledge in this particular field, and he has inspired pupils whom he has trained to follow up his work. As members of this *Society* we are greatly in his debt. We are well aware that the conclusions reached by investigators in this field are often distasteful, since they run counter to the bias of the day. It is perhaps only fair to say that some of the investigators have not always been free from bias themselves; at least they have tended at times

to trail their coats. But this does not apply to our lecturer. His manifest freedom from bias, his obvious scientific integrity and his clarity of exposition command attention and respect wherever and whenever he speaks. We look forward to his lecture on "The Trend of National Intelligence."

The Galton Lecture

The Galton Lecture, published in full elsewhere in this issue, was generally acclaimed as among the finest of a most distinguished series. Notwithstanding the difficulty of the subject-matter, Professor Thomson kept the audience completely absorbed, reducing the complex data to simple and readily intelligible terms and speaking throughout with rare spontaneity and only a very occasional recourse to notes. The prolonged applause at the end was a tribute not less to the lecturer's manner than to his choice of theme. In moving a warmly accorded vote of thanks, Dr. Fraser-Roberts said :

The Galton Lecture is the most important occasion of the year in our *Society*. In previous years lecturers of great eminence have given us magnificent addresses on a variety of notable topics. It is a high standard which has been set, and one of which the *Society* is proud. It is, therefore, a great compliment to say, and I am sure that you agree with me, that the Galton Lecture of to-day has never been surpassed.

Differential fertility is far and away the most important issue in practical eugenics. And it is important not only in itself ; its study will provide, in my opinion, the most useful clues in understanding and coping with the whole problem of the future of our population. Professor Godfrey Thomson has presented the subject in a masterly fashion ; I have never heard or seen a more adequate or lucid exposition.

Professor Thomson as a psychologist, a mathematician and an educationalist has been one of the leading contributors of our time to scientific progress. And during the course of his work he has made a host of friends. Those of you who are meeting him for the first time to-day will, I am sure, have realized something not only of his scientific quality but of his human quality also. It gives me great pleasure to propose, on your behalf, a most sincere vote of thanks, and I ask you to show your appreciation in the usual way.

There was renewed applause when Professor Thomson made a brief reply, bringing a memorable Galton anniversary to a close.